

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DURBAN 0646

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TAGS: PINT, PINS, SF

SUBJ: SYMPOSIUM ON PEACEFUL CHANGE AT INDIAN UNIVERSITY

DISRUPTED BY RADICAL STUDENTS; BUTHELEZI THREATENS INDIANS

REF: DURBAN A-32

1. RADICAL PLACARD-CARRYING (INDIAN) UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE STUDENTS DISRUPTED A FACULTY-STUDENT-SPONSORED SYMPOSIUM ON "SOUTH AFRICA-POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES FOR A PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE" SEPTEMBER 22 AND CAUSED CHIEF GATSHA BUTHELEZI, ONE OF THE INVITED SPEAKERS, TO COMMENT "IF THEY INSULT ME, THE ZULUS WILL WIPE OUT THE INDIANS BY TONIGHT" AND THREATEN TO LEAVE CAMPUS AND NEVER RETURN.

2. THEY SYMPOSIUM WAS TO HAVE BEGUN AT 9 A.M. AND TO HAVE HEARD A NUMBER OF MODERATE-LIBERAL SPEAKERS, INCLUDING BUTHELEZI, ALAN PATON, NATAL PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FRANK MARTIN, SUNDAY TIMES WRITER KEN OWEN, COLORED EDUCATOR MORRIS LEWIS, PFP CHAIRMAN RAY SWART, AND INDIAN EDITOR PAT POOVALINGAM. HOWEVER AS MEETING CHAIRMAN BUSINESS

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ADMIN PROFESSOR J. VENTER BEGAN TO SPEAK TO SOME 800 STUDENTS AND INKATHA MEMBERS IN HALL, SOME 150 RADICALS (MAINLY SASO) ENTERED THE ROOM AND BEGAN SINGING FREEDOM SONGS, CHANTING, "AMANDLA" AND "POWER TO THE PEOPLE", AND CALLING THE SPEAKERS "STOOGES". WHEN VENTER AND RECTOR S.P. OLIVER PLEADED FOR QUIET, STUDENTS BECAME EVEN LOUDER, HURLED MINI-STINK BOMBS AT THEM, AND CUT THE MICROPHONE CORD. VENTER, UNABLE TO BE

HEARD, WROTE ON A BLACKBOARD THAT THE MEETING WAS BEING MOVED TO A LARGER HALL TO ACCOMMODATE THE OVERFLOW CROWD.

3. ON THE WAY TO THE HALL, VENTER AND PATON INTERCEPTED CHIEF BUTHELEZI, WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED ON CAMPUS. THEY EXPLAINED WHAT HAD HAPPENED, AND BUTHELEZI MADE THE STATEMENT THREATENING INDIANS AND BEGAN TO LEAVE THE CAMPUS. HOWEVER VENTER AND OLIVER SUCCESSFULLY CONVINCED HIM THAT ONLY A TINY MINORITY HAD PROTESTED AGAINST HIS APPEARANCE, AND THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY HAD WANTED TO HEAR HIM (SEE REFAIR). HE SEEMED MOLLIFIED AND LATER JOINED OLIVER IN A QUIET LUNCH BEFORE LEAVING CAMPUS.

4. THE CHANGE OF VENUE PROVED TO BE MEANINGLESS WHEN THE RADICALS TOOK OVER THE STAGE AT THE NEW HALL AND REFUSED TO PERMIT THE SPEAKERS TO TALK. THE LATTER (EXCEPT BUTHELEZI WHO DID NOT GO TO THE HALL) WAITED FOR AN HOUR WHILE THE RADICALS ATTACKED "PSEUDO-LIBERALISM" AND "GOVERNMENT STOOGES" AND CALLED FOR THE OTHER STUDENTS TO JOIN THEM ON STAGE IN A SHOW OF SOLIDARITY. EVENTUALLY THE SPEAKERS LEFT AND THE STUDENTS, THEIR FERVOR VENTED, DISPERSED.

5. FRANK MARTIN TOLD A CONOFF LATER THE RADICALS' ACTION WAS IRRESPONSIBLE, SINCE THERE WAS NO ONE ON THE STAGE WHOM THEY HAD THE RIGHT TO ABUSE FOR BEING PRO-GOVERNMENT.

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YM COMMENT: BUTHELEZI'S COMMENT, WHICH RECEIVED MUCH PLAY IN THE DURBAN PRESS, REFLECTED BOTH HIS WELL-DOCUMENTED INABILITY TO ACCEPT CRITICISM AND THE SUSPICION OF INDIANS WHICH AFRICANS HAVE HAD EVER SINCE THE FORMER'S ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY. EARLY PRESS REPORTS OF THE INCIDENT (LATER CORRECTED), WHICH DID NOT NOTE THAT BUTHELEZI HAD BEEN MOLLIFIED AND WHICH QUOTED HIM AS SAYING HE COULD NOT BE RESPONSIBLE IF THE INCIDENT LED TO ANOTHER INDO-ZULU RIOT LIKE 1949, MAY ONLY EXACERBATE LATTER SUSPICION AND CAUSE SOME ANTI-INDIAN VIOLENCE. BUT CONOFF WHO ARRIVED ON CAMPUS SHORTLY AFTER DISTURBANCE ENDED FOUND INKATHA MEMBERS UNDERSTOOD ONLY RADICAL MINORITY WAS RESPONSIBLE AND THAT THERE WAS NO REASON FOR VIOLENT ANTI-INDIAN REACTION. FUGIT

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